

Information for Business and Industry

The Petroleum Products Program seeks to provide customer confidence when purchasing petroleum and automotive products by ensuring uniformity, fairness and honest competition in the marketplace. This is done by eliminating false advertising and misrepresentation of prices and product quality.

The Division of Measurement Standards Investigators and Specialists work with county weights and measures officials to enforce California's petroleum and automotive products quality, quantity, advertising and labeling laws within the State. The Program also enforces the posting of signs relating to disabled drivers services and [Air and Water](#) equipment. The quality specifications enforced by the Division of Measurement Standards that are of most interest to the motoring public and consumers are:

- Gasoline – octane number, distillation, water and sediment
- Diesel Fuel – cetane number, distillation, flash point, water and sediment
- Motor Oil – viscosity
- Automatic Transmission Fluid – viscosity
- Engine Coolant (antifreeze) – boiling point and freezing point
- Brake Fluid – boiling point

Products that fail to meet the minimum quality specifications or labeling requirements are removed from sale and are not released back for sale until they are made to comply with applicable laws and regulations. When a product is removed from sale, it is illegal for it to be moved or disposed of without authorization from a weights and measures official.

It is illegal to mix new product with an off specification product in an attempt to bring the off specification product into compliance without authorization from a weights and measures official. It is also illegal to commingle products of different brands or grades for any reason.

Products are sampled by both open inspections and undercover purchases using specially adapted equipment and vehicles. Sampling occurs in retail stores, wholesale outlets, warehouses, and vehicle repair facilities.

Alternative fuels, for which California has not adopted specifications, are illegal to sell in California. There are procedures for obtaining a variance for developmental engine fuels that allow it to be sold to fleets while a consensus standard for the fuel is being developed.

Service stations are required to post the prices of the motor vehicle fuel that they sell. The signs must be visible to the motorist before entering the station to purchase fuel. Any conditions applicable to the sale of the fuel at the advertised price must also be on the advertising sign (i.e., full service or self service and cash price or credit price).

Violations of the petroleum and automotive product quality, advertising and labeling laws are misdemeanors. Violators can be issued a Notice of Violation or a citation. Additionally, a complaint may be filed with the district attorney against them for violations.

The Program is funded by a motor oil assessment fee paid by the company that first produces the oil in California or the person or business that imports the oil into California.

The Division of Measurement Standards **does not** regulate the price of gasoline or diesel fuel. Questions about the price of fuel can be directed to the California Energy Commission at their website: www.energy.ca.gov, or to the industry trade associations such as the California Independent Oil Marketers Association at www.cioma.com or the Western States Petroleum Association at www.wspa.org.